

General Educational Development (GED) Civics Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



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Questions

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- 1. What is the main purpose of the executive branch?**
 - A. To enforce the laws**
 - B. To create laws**
 - C. To interpret laws**
 - D. To oversee state governments**
- 2. Which power is reserved for state governments?**
 - A. Setting immigration laws**
 - B. Providing protection**
 - C. Conducting foreign relations**
 - D. Declaring war**
- 3. What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?**
 - A. Ended the Revolutionary War**
 - B. Granted citizenship to all**
 - C. Freed the slaves in the Confederate states**
 - D. Civil rights for women**
- 4. What is considered the supreme law of the land?**
 - A. The Constitution**
 - B. The Declaration of Independence**
 - C. The Bill of Rights**
 - D. The Federalist Papers**
- 5. Which branch of government is responsible for making federal laws?**
 - A. Judicial Branch**
 - B. Executive Branch**
 - C. Legislative Branch**
 - D. Administrative Branch**
- 6. What is one responsibility of the President?**
 - A. To command the military**
 - B. To legislate laws**
 - C. To interpret laws**
 - D. To conduct elections**

- 7. Who is known as the "Father of Our Country"?**
- A. Thomas Jefferson**
 - B. Abraham Lincoln**
 - C. George Washington**
 - D. John Adams**
- 8. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.**
- A. Apaches**
 - B. Chippewa**
 - C. Sioux**
 - D. All of the above**
- 9. What is the role of the U.S. Senate in relation to the President?**
- A. To elect the President**
 - B. To advise and consent on treaties and appointments**
 - C. To impeach the President**
 - D. To create legislation without the President's approval**
- 10. What is the capital of the United States?**
- A. New York City**
 - B. Washington, D.C.**
 - C. Los Angeles**
 - D. Chicago**

Answers

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- 1. A**
- 2. B**
- 3. C**
- 4. A**
- 5. C**
- 6. A**
- 7. C**
- 8. D**
- 9. B**
- 10. B**

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Explanations

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1. What is the main purpose of the executive branch?

- A. To enforce the laws**
- B. To create laws**
- C. To interpret laws**
- D. To oversee state governments**

The executive branch is primarily responsible for enforcing the laws enacted by the legislative branch. This branch is led by the President at the federal level, and it includes various departments and agencies that implement and administer federal laws, regulations, and policies. The enforcement of laws ensures that they are carried out effectively and that the public adheres to them. While the legislative branch is tasked with creating laws and the judicial branch with interpreting them, the executive branch plays a crucial role in ensuring that those laws are executed properly. This includes carrying out day-to-day administration and national policies, managing government operations, and ensuring compliance with legal standards. The other options highlight different functions that do not align with the primary role of the executive branch.

2. Which power is reserved for state governments?

- A. Setting immigration laws**
- B. Providing protection**
- C. Conducting foreign relations**
- D. Declaring war**

State governments have the power to provide protection, which includes maintaining law enforcement agencies, emergency services, and local militia. This power falls under the states' responsibilities to ensure the safety and welfare of their residents. While the federal government has a significant role in national defense and immigration, the provision of public safety and the administration of justice is largely managed at the state level. The other options pertain to powers that are typically reserved for the federal government. For instance, setting immigration laws, conducting foreign relations, and declaring war are matters that fall under the purview of the federal government, as states do not have the authority to engage in these activities independently. This distinction is crucial in understanding the balance of power between state and federal governments outlined in the U.S. Constitution.

3. What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?

- A. Ended the Revolutionary War
- B. Granted citizenship to all
- C. Freed the slaves in the Confederate states**
- D. Civil rights for women

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, was a pivotal document in U.S. history that declared the freedom of all enslaved people in Confederate states that were in rebellion against the Union. This was a strategic move during the Civil War, aimed at weakening the Confederacy by disrupting their labor force and encouraging enslaved individuals to escape or join Union forces. Although it did not immediately free all enslaved people, as it applied only to areas controlled by the Confederacy, it was a crucial step towards the eventual abolition of slavery across the entire nation, which was formally achieved with the 13th Amendment. The other options do not relate to the Emancipation Proclamation. Ending the Revolutionary War refers to events that occurred decades prior, while granting citizenship to all pertains to later developments in civil rights. Civil rights for women also emerged significantly later, particularly during the suffrage movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus, the choice highlighting the freeing of slaves in Confederate states accurately reflects the primary impact of the Emancipation Proclamation.

4. What is considered the supreme law of the land?

- A. The Constitution**
- B. The Declaration of Independence
- C. The Bill of Rights
- D. The Federalist Papers

The Constitution is considered the supreme law of the land because it serves as the foundational legal document for the United States government. It outlines the structure of the government, defines the powers and responsibilities of each branch, and establishes the rights of citizens. The principle of "supremacy" established in Article VI of the Constitution indicates that it takes precedence over any state laws and plays a critical role in ensuring a unified legal framework across the country. This means that any law or action that contradicts the Constitution can be deemed unconstitutional and therefore invalid. In contrast, the Declaration of Independence, while a pivotal document in American history, primarily served to declare the colonies' independence from British rule and does not function as a governing legal document. The Bill of Rights, consisting of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, protects individual liberties but is part of the Constitution itself rather than a separate law. The Federalist Papers are a collection of writings that argue in favor of the ratification of the Constitution and provide insight into the framers' intentions but do not have legal authority or status as law.

5. Which branch of government is responsible for making federal laws?

- A. Judicial Branch**
- B. Executive Branch**
- C. Legislative Branch**
- D. Administrative Branch**

The Legislative Branch is responsible for making federal laws. In the United States, this branch is comprised of two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Members of the Legislative Branch propose, debate, and vote on legislation that can become law once it is passed by both chambers and signed by the President. The structure of the government is designed to ensure that no single branch has too much power, with the Legislative Branch specifically tasked with law-making to represent the interests of the people. This function is crucial in a democracy, as it allows elected representatives to create laws based on the current needs and values of society. In contrast, the Judicial Branch interprets laws and ensures they align with the Constitution, while the Executive Branch implements and enforces these laws. The Administrative Branch is not typically considered one of the main branches of government; instead, it refers to the various agencies and bureaus that operate under the Executive Branch to carry out specific governmental functions. Understanding the distinct responsibilities of each branch highlights the importance of the Legislative Branch in the law-making process.

6. What is one responsibility of the President?

- A. To command the military**
- B. To legislate laws**
- C. To interpret laws**
- D. To conduct elections**

One important responsibility of the President is to command the military. This role is part of the President's position as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. This authority allows the President to make critical decisions regarding national defense and military operations, such as deploying troops and leading the country in times of conflict. The role emphasizes the President's responsibility to safeguard the nation and respond to threats. The other options involve roles typically associated with other branches of government. For example, legislating laws is primarily the responsibility of Congress, which is tasked with creating laws. Interpreting laws falls under the judicial branch, where courts and judges determine how laws should be applied in various scenarios. Conducting elections is mainly the responsibility of state and local governments, although the President may have a role in advocating for fair election processes.

7. Who is known as the "Father of Our Country"?

- A. Thomas Jefferson**
- B. Abraham Lincoln**
- C. George Washington**
- D. John Adams**

George Washington is known as the "Father of Our Country" because of his pivotal role in the founding of the United States. He served as the commander of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War, leading the colonies to victory against British rule. His leadership qualities, dedication, and vision for a unified nation established him as a central figure in American history. Furthermore, Washington's presidency from 1789 to 1797 set many precedents for the office and helped lay the foundation for the federal government. He is celebrated for his commitment to the principles of democracy and governance, including serving only two terms to prevent the consolidation of power. This selfless approach to leadership and his unifying presence earned him the title of "Father of Our Country." In contrast, the other figures mentioned, while significant in their own rights—Thomas Jefferson as the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, Abraham Lincoln for preserving the nation during the Civil War, and John Adams for his role in early governance and independence—do not hold the same designation in the context of the founding of the United States as Washington does.

8. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.

- A. Apaches**
- B. Chippewa**
- C. Sioux**
- D. All of the above**

The correct answer encompasses all the listed options because Apaches, Chippewa, and Sioux are indeed recognized American Indian tribes in the United States. Each of these tribes has a rich history and cultural heritage, contributing significantly to the diverse legacy of Native American peoples. Apaches are known for their significant presence in the Southwestern United States, known for their resilience and adaptability in the face of various challenges throughout history. The Chippewa, also known as the Ojibwe, predominantly inhabit areas around the Great Lakes and have a vital cultural influence in that region. The Sioux, considered one of the largest tribes in the Great Plains, are renowned for their warrior culture and strong traditions. Since all three tribes are valid examples of American Indian tribes, the answer accurately reflects the complexity and diversity of Native American heritage. This collective acknowledgment highlights the importance of recognizing various tribes and their contributions to American history and society.

9. What is the role of the U.S. Senate in relation to the President?

A. To elect the President

B. To advise and consent on treaties and appointments

C. To impeach the President

D. To create legislation without the President's approval

The role of the U.S. Senate in relation to the President primarily involves advising and consenting on treaties and appointments. This constitutional function is outlined in Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution. The Senate must approve certain presidential appointments, including cabinet members, ambassadors, and federal judges, which ensures a system of checks and balances between the branches of government. Additionally, any international treaties negotiated by the President must be ratified by a two-thirds majority in the Senate, reflecting the Senate's critical role in foreign policy decisions. This process ensures that the President cannot unilaterally make appointments or commitments that might significantly impact the country without the Senate's input. The requirement for Senate approval serves as a way to involve the legislative branch in significant executive decisions and to maintain a balance of power. Consequently, this advisory and consent function is a fundamental aspect of the Senate's relationship with the President, highlighting the collaborative nature of governance in the U.S. system.

10. What is the capital of the United States?

A. New York City

B. Washington, D.C.

C. Los Angeles

D. Chicago

Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States because it was established specifically for that purpose. The city was created to serve as the nation's capital due to its central location along the East Coast and its significance as a political center. This choice was made during the founding of the country to symbolize neutrality between the northern and southern states. Washington, D.C. houses the primary government institutions, including the White House, Congress, and the Supreme Court. This historical and functional role makes it the official capital, distinguishing it from other major cities like New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, which are significant in different ways but do not serve as the capital.